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HB 2028
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR AN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
A SPACE PORT IN HAWAII

Statement for
House Committees on
Water, Land Use, Development, and Hawaiian Affairs
Higher Education and the Arts
Public Hearing - February 5, 1988

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HB 2028 would designate a sum of 1.2 million dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 1988-89, for the preparation of an environmental impact statement for a proposed space port in Hawaii.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

HB 2028 appropriately recognizes the need for early and thorough environmental assessment/impact analysis for the space port and the drafters of this bill are to be commended for their foresight. We fully concur with the intent of the bill but we are concerned that as presently drafted it may not be the most effective action at this time.

An environmental impact statement is a document that describes the environmental issues and consequences of a particular action, in a specific place, and within a defined time frame. According to Section 1 of HB 2028, the site for the space port has not yet been established. To our knowledge, none of the characteristics of the particular action, such as the size, configuration, operations, equipment needs, labor force, access roads, water supply, sewage treatment facility, or any of the other structural, social or physical requirements of the space port have been documented and no time schedule for implementation of the port has been defined. To appropriate funds specifically designated for the EIS when the location, scope, and schedule are so poorly defined seems premature.

The bill emphasizes an urgency to act now on preparing the EIS so that delays attributed to environmental issues relative to the establishment of the space port can be averted. While we concur that early environmental studies are important, it should be stressed that most, if not all of the environmental assessment data can be compiled and the EIS prepared simultaneously, and more accurately and efficiently, with other design and planning studies for the facility. Furthermore, joint preparation of the EIS with the planning phase will permit environmental issues to be considered during the site selection process.

As presently drafted, HB 2028 makes no mention of federal involvement in the development of the space port facility. If federal monies will be involved, then it is likely that a federal EIS will be required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Joint coordination of the state and federal EIS's should be required to avoid duplication of efforts and costs.

We suggest that HB 2028 be ammended to allow greater flexibility in the use of the funds for environmental studies pertinent to the space port facility rather than limiting their use to the preparation of the EIS. Use of the funds for the compilation of environmental data needed for site selection, project scoping, as well as the initial development of the EIS would provide a more timely, comprehensive, and environmentally appropriate method of addressing potential environmental issues related to the establishment of a space port in Hawaii.